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ABSTRACT

Contributed by high school English teachers across the United States, the activities contained in this booklet are intended to promote the effective teaching of English and the language arts. Activities described in the first section of the booklet focus on language exploration--specifically examining variations in pronunciation, definition, and vocabulary--and look at how the intended audience influences the manner of speech and the message conveyed. Activities offered in the second section are designed to stimulate an appreciation of classic and contemporary literature, and to suggest techniques for introducing literary works to students. Specific activities in this section deal with sentence combining, comparing themes and characters in prose and poetry, transforming literature to a newspaper format, creating playscripts, and comparing ancient myths to modern versions. Activities in the third section are intended to provoke interest in writing, build students' confidence in their writing skills, and stimulate the flow of words and ideas. Activities described in this section deal with journal writing, descriptive writing, figurative language, and poetry writing. (FL)

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A Collection of Practical Teaching Ideas

Book Two

National Council of Teachers of English
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Foreword

IDEAS Plus and its quarterly companion *NOTES Plus* are the principal benefits of NCTE Plus Membership. Last year, you were sent Book One of *IDEAS Plus*. This collection represents the second edition, or Book Two.

Unlike the first edition, this collection was not assembled at NCTE Headquarters from contributions by NCTE Plus members. Rather, the present collection was compiled under the direction of William Horst and Dianne Shaw and sponsored by the NCTE Secondary Section. Bill and Dianne were ably assisted by editors Margueritte Caldwell (Literature), Leila Christenbury (Language), Beverly Haley (Composition), and Skip Nicholson (Media).

Teaching ideas were submitted in a somewhat different format than for Book One, but the overall effect is the same: a resource of workable and proven activities that high school teachers of English can refer to. In short, this collection of ideas continues the main business of the National Council of Teachers of English—the sharing of ideas toward the more effective teaching of English and the language arts.

1 Language Exploration

> Language is the armory of the human mind; and at once contains the trophies of its past, and the weapons of its future conquests.
>
> Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Arming students with polished language skills prepares them for communicating ideas in today's and tomorrow's worlds. Activities that focus on how the spoken word and the written word shape thoughts and convey messages demonstrate the power of language in everyday life. These activities explore variations in pronunciation, definition, and vocabulary, and look at how the intended audience influences the manner of speech and the message that is conveyed. The activities encourage the finding of information in reference sources and through interviewing. In all, the emphasis is on building the framework for accurate communication.

There's More Than One Way to Say It

A classroom activity that calls for close inspection of words and phrases can help instill in students an appreciation of the nuances and subtle differences in the English language. I prepare students for individual research projects by discussing examples of Middle English, early Modern English, and British English. I demonstrate examples of variations in vocabulary and pronunciation within our country by looking at dialects, regional expressions, shoptalk, and slang. Recordings, filmstrips, and films can be especially effective in highlighting these variations. I also talk about how the positions, movements, and gestures of body language can communicate attitudes and emotions, often subconsciously.

Then I prepare a list of individual language research projects and notify the school and local librarians about the assignment. Students will write up their research findings and present an oral summary so that the entire class benefits from the exercise. When I hand out the list I suggest

methods to make the presentations interesting and informative, and I specify how I will grade the projects.

Here are some topics I've had success using, with the number of examples presented to the class adjusted according to the class size:

1. List twenty-five examples of differences between British English and American English. Include variations in spelling, pronunciation, and vocabulary.
2. Research the origins of the first five letters in our alphabet. Explain what each letter symbolizes and how the letters for these same sounds are formed and pronounced in five non-Roman alphabets.
3. Select twenty-five lines from Shakespeare and rewrite them in the English of today.
4. List thirty examples of differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and idiom between the way people in our area speak and the speech of people in another part of the country.
5. During several hours each day for the next week, keep track of examples of body language you observe—in the classroom, in the lunchroom, at home, on television, or in public places. Demonstrate several examples to the class and have the students guess what each behavior signifies.
6. Compile a dictionary of fifty slang expressions used by your friends or by today's teenagers in general. Alphabetize the expressions and provide a "translation" in standard English.
7. Interview someone whose occupation involves shoptalk. Compile a chart of twenty expressions and explanations.
8. Using clippings or your own lettering, prepare thirty flashcards with popular advertising slogans on one side and the appropriate company name on the reverse side. See how many slogans the class recognizes.
9. Compare English to a foreign language you are studying. Give three examples of pronunciation differences and list fifteen words that are similar in both languages.
10. Tape-record an interview with someone who didn't learn English until becoming an adult. Ask him or her to tell about three incidents that demonstrate the difficulties in learning English.

Adele Diane Gaster, on leave from Bloomfield Junior High School, Bloomfield, Connecticut, and currently teaching writing at several New England colleges

Junior Lexicographers

Junior high students (indeed, most of us) tend to look on dictionaries as dull and utilitarian. An activity where students prepare their own dictionaries demonstrates the individual and sometimes surprising properties of these reference tools.

Each student needs a standard collegiate dictionary for this assignment. Also round up from the library copies of standard dictionaries by other publishers, an unabridged dictionary, specialized dictionaries, foreign language dictionaries, and older dictionaries, if available. Discuss with students the steps in preparing a dictionary and have students practice writing definitions of common words with numerous meanings, such as *make* and *scale*. Compare individual students' efforts at spelling and defining, and then examine the definitions of the same words in several modern dictionaries. Choose a term that has recently taken on a new definition—perhaps a technical word like *programming* or *disk*—and look up its definition in both a current dictionary and an older dictionary. Also examine some specialized dictionaries, such as those listing railroad terms or literary terms. Compare the specialized definition of a term like *featherbed* with its definition in a standard collegiate dictionary. These differences will demonstrate to students that definitions change over time and that words may have different definitions depending on the audience.

Now students are ready to start this two-part assignment. First, they will develop expertise in dictionary preparation by working as a class to create a dictionary of terms, including slang, that are most often used by teenagers. The class will select the terms and then work together to define them.

In the second part of the assignment, each student creates a personal dictionary on a topic of particular interest, such as musical or automotive terms, or words about the sea, animals, or sports. These dictionaries will follow the standard format of dictionaries and may include illustrations, a gazeteer, and bibliographic information.

In preparing both their personal dictionary and the class dictionary, students must first confront the problem of selecting words. They will find that determining principles to govern inclusion and exclusion is not an easy task and that defining words is more difficult than it appears. They may consult their printed dictionaries for aid in defining terms, but they must write their own definitions. Students will also have to determine the spelling or alternate spellings for each word, decide on the parts of speech each word may serve, and, in some cases, research the origin of the word. At all times students must concentrate on remaining accurate.

A copy of the completed class dictionary is distributed to all students in the class, their parents, and other teachers. The personal dictionaries are displayed for all to enjoy and then are available for future writing assignments.

Robert C. Small, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia

Fine Tuning a Critical Ear

What teenager doesn't enjoy listening to the radio? This activity gives students an opportunity to listen to their favorite station with a more critical ear. They take a closer look at the varying formats used by different radio stations and analyze these formats and the audience each station tries to reach.

Students are assigned to spend one hour listening to a radio station of their choice. I know that many students will have the same favorite station, but I encourage them to select different stations, possibly one they've never listened to before.

I hand out the following evaluation sheet and have students answer questions 1 through 4 as they listen:

One Hour with a Radio Station

Name of radio station and call letters:

Time of listening:

1. *Personalities*
   What was the name of the disc jockey or host?
   How much time did the disc jockey or host spend talking?
   What subjects did he or she talk about?
   What was his or her radio style?
   Do you have a mental image of what this person looks like?
   If you listened to a sports program, were you able to follow what the announcer was describing?
   Was the announcer well familiar with the sport and the players?
2. *Commercials* (if the station is a commercial one)
   What were the products advertised?
   What was the average length of one commercial?
   What was the average length of a cluster of several commercials?
   What was the average length of time between clusters?
   How many commercials were prerecorded?
   How many commercials were read live by the disc jockey or host?

3. *Programming*
   What was the general program format—music, discussion/interview, news, sports event?
   What subjects were discussed by speakers or interviewees during this hour?
   If call-in comments or questions were broadcast during the hour, did the listeners tend to agree with the topic as discussed or disagree?
   If you listened to a sports program, was it a broadcast of a local event or a major league team?
   How much time was spent on news programming during the hour?
   Did the news focus on national or local news?
4. *Music*
   How many recordings were played during the hour?
   What were the titles of the selections?
   How would you classify the music?
   How many of the recordings were current hits? How many "golden oldies"? How many "other"?
5. *Conclusions*
   In what category would you classify this radio station?
   What audience is this station trying to attract?
   Did the products advertised suit this audience?
   What does the station seem to be doing to attract listeners from this market?
6. *Generalizations*
   What formats seem to be most common among the stations discussed?
   How are commercials, talk shows, news reports, music, sports events, and the host's monologue tailored to station format?
   How do radio stations attract a target audience?

In class the following day, students discuss and compare the various radio stations. They talk about the different programming, the different personalities of the announcers, and the different target audiences. Often many of the students have listened to the same radio station during the same hour interval and have differing assessments of the announcer as well as different reactions to the music played during the hour. At the end of the discussion I assign a short paper answering questions 5 and 6. Students draw conclusions about the one station they listened to; then they make generalizations about all the stations discussed.

Patricia A. Slagle, Male Traditional High School, Louisville, Kentucky

Speaking Precisely

The following activity demonstrates to students that specific and concrete words and examples are far more effective in communicating ideas than are abstract and general terms. The activity also gives students experience in the most common public speaking situation, impromptu speaking. They enjoy being before the class for a short interval without the pressure of preparing a speech.

First, draw up a list of common and general words and phrases, and write these expressions on individual cards. Current slang, clichés, and popular expressions work well. Here are some possibilities for you to consider:

spoiled brat	bad music	school spirit
boring class	to the max	good movie
good teacher	unfair test	freedom
rude person	good American	it's a bummer
coward	nice looking	it's the pits

Then I give students the following directions:

> In a moment you will draw a card bearing a word or phrase. You are to give an impromptu speech to the class defining the words you have drawn. Your goal is to have members of this class guess what is on your card. You may define the words in any way you wish. For example, you may use synonyms or antonyms, or state comparisons or contrasts, or provide examples, or you may do all of these. But under no circumstances may you use in your speech any of the words on the card or any of their derivatives.
>
> You have up to one minute to speak. If you are still speaking when one minute is up, a stop card will be shown, and you are to end by finishing your sentence. When you finish, all members of the audience will write down what they think your word or phrase is.
>
> As members of the audience, you are to be silent. Resist the temptation to call out words. Wait until a speaker is finished and then write down the word or phrase you believe the speaker is defining.

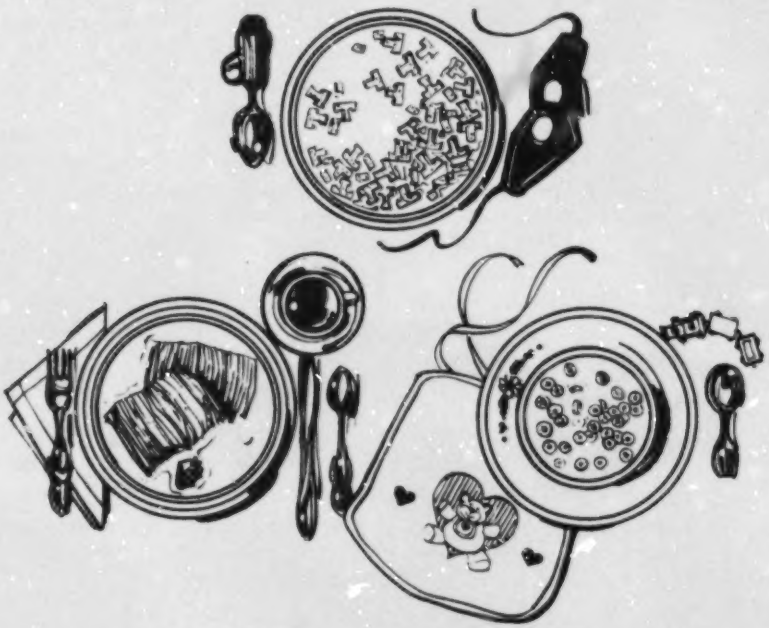
Define the order in which the students will speak (voluntary, alphabetical, by seating arrangement) and have each student pick a card right before speaking so that no one has more time in which to prepare. Also, select a student to time speakers and to hold up the stop card.

As each impromptu speech is completed, students jot down what they think the mystery word or phrase is. Once all speeches have been given, discuss each word or phrase and find out how many students identified it correctly. What were some of the incorrect guesses? Discuss why some phrases were easy to guess and why some were difficult. Point out how listeners usually do not have a clear understanding of a speaker's ideas when abstract terms are used to describe general terms. For example, using an expression like *terrific show* to define *good movie* may be unclear; the message will be more obvious if the speaker describes some popular and acclaimed movies.

Sandra Hochel, University of South Carolina, Aiken, South Carolina

Ad Analysis

Students, like all of us, are continually receiving advertising messages from television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, and the ever-familiar direct mail packets. This two-part activity helps students to recognize that ads are targeted to specific audiences and to become more aware of the persuasion strategies and nonverbal messages that advertisers employ.



I bring in a pile of old magazines and invite students to do the same. Working in groups, students first locate a minimum of five ads for different brands of the same product. I pass out an Ad Analysis Chart to each student and have the group members work together to determine the target audience, the visual and verbal strategies for reaching the intended audience, and their assessment of the effectiveness of each ad. Students discuss similarities and differences in the ads and pay particular attention to the differences among ads aimed at different audiences. Then, student groups identify a target audience not included in their sample ads and write the script for a thirty-second radio spot advertising the same product as in their ads. When the ads are revised and in final form, each group tape-records the ad for playback to the other students or does a "live" reading before the class.

Ad Analysis Chart

Type of product:

Brand	Target Audience	Visual Strategies	Verbal Strategies	Assessment
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

In the second part of the activity, students—working individually, in pairs, or in groups—collect a series of four to six magazine ads that represent a thematic ad campaign for a particular brand of a product. (For example, some recent ad campaigns are "Reach out and touch someone" by AT&T, "Mr. Goodwrench" by General Motors, and "We bring good things to life" by General Electric.) Students analyze the subtle, nonverbal, and inferential aspects of the ad campaign by answering the following questions:

1. What messages are communicated by the images in the ads?
2. Who are portrayed as users of this product? Will this shut out, turn off, or alienate those who don't fit the stereotyped user? Why or why not?
3. What unstated, underlying, or implied messages are contained in the ads?

4. What is your affective reaction or response to these ads? What is your intellectual reaction or response?
5. How would you describe in your own words the method, strategy, and appeal used in the ad campaign?
6. What objects or items are associated with the product in the ads? What do these imply? What inferences do the objects encourage you to draw?
7. Is the language used in the copy of the ads highly figurative or highly literal? Is it connotative? Explain. Does the written copy use any euphemisms? Explain what they are and what their purpose is. Do the ads use predominantly hard consonants or soft blends of vowels and consonants? What effect does this word choice have on the reader?

After they analyze the ads, students assume the role of an advertising salesperson. Using specific arguments, each student is to present reasons for designing the particular ad campaign to the company producing the product in an attempt to "sell" the company on the ad campaign. The arguments should be written in the form of a report to the company's board of directors.

Patricia A. Slagle, Male Traditional High School, Louisville, Kentucky

Meeting the Martians

Preparing to speak to visitors from outer space is an activity that demonstrates that we use different levels of language and that our audience and conversational topic determine the appropriate level of language.

Set the stage for the activity by dividing the class into groups of three or four students and by giving each group a copy of the following background information:

> It is the year 3018, and Mars and Earth are in the fifth year of friendly relations. The Martians, we have found, are very much like Earthlings except in language and in some Earthly customs and inventions. Exchange programs between the two planets are now frequent, and Martians and Earthlings alike are enjoying the opportunities to get to know one another.
>
> A family of Martians has landed for a month-long visit in our community. This family is intelligent and peace loving, and they studied English for some years at home in preparation for this exchange. They are here in our community to learn about some

Earthly machines and inventions. Each day the individual members of the family are assigned different Earthlings as their tutors.

Today, it's your group. You will be teaching one of the Martians about two Earthly inventions. You are to explain the inventions in detail, but remember that you must gear your explanation to the age and background of your particular Martian family member.

To determine the audience for their instructional sessions, each group draws a card listing one of the following Martian family members (in large classes, two groups may share the same audience):

A young Martian with a fifth-grade education

A middle-aged Martian with a college degree

A very young Martian who has just completed the first grade

A teenage Martian who is a sophomore in high school

An older Martian with a seventh-grade education

An older Martian who is a highly skilled medical doctor

Then have each group select two cards listing an Earthly invention, machine, or custom. I've had success with the following list:

pacemaker	sewing machine
telephone	homecoming celebration
video games	college entrance exams
light bulb	Halloween trick-or-treating
refrigerator	submarine
digital watch	computer
eyeglasses	car transmission
report cards	air conditioner
washing machine	food processor
time zones	internal combustion engine
income tax system	dating
stereo components	Thanksgiving

Give the groups about fifteen minutes to prepare a two-minute explanation for each of the inventions and customs, and remind students to direct their explanation to the particular Martian they are to tutor. Have dictionaries available for checking vocabulary, but stress that definitions cannot be taken from the dictionary. Each group should select one member to present the explanations to the class.

When the preparation time is up, I pass out copies of the following evaluation sheet:

Martian Rating Sheet

The tutor for the Martians was _____.

The inventions or customs the tutor explained were _____ and _____.

The audience for the explanations was _____.

When the tutor explained the inventions or customs, I felt:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
The inventions or customs were explained thoroughly.	_____	_____	_____
The Martian would know how the invention was used or how the custom worked.	_____	_____	_____
The explanation was clear.	_____	_____	_____
The explanation used vocabulary appropriate to the audience.	_____	_____	_____
The Martian would have no problem repeating this explanation to another Martian.	_____	_____	_____

Students evaluate the explanations as the representative from each group gives an oral presentation. Then have students discuss which group was most effective in presenting material to its audience and identify differences among the groups in their method and content of presentation.

Leila Christenbury, Hollins College, Roanoke, Virginia

Classroom Press Conference

Holding a classroom press conference helps students develop skills in oral information gathering and provides a writing experience in a familiar, highly structured format.

Bring in several news stories from a local newspaper and make copies for each student or use an overhead projector. Discuss the inverted pyramid arrangement of information, paying particular attention to the opening sentence in each story. Note where each of the *who, what, when, where, why,* and *how* questions is answered and ask students to imagine

the specific questions the reporter may have asked to obtain this information.

Next, have your students become reporters attending a press conference that you will hold, and make them responsible for a 100-word news story reporting the proceedings. Stress that the students may ask you as many questions as they want and that they needn't write up all the information they gather.

Begin the press conference by reading a prepared statement, such as the following:

> My name is Lieutenant Healey, and I've called this press conference to announce that a two-alarm fire at 1048 Nicholson Drive claimed the life of Cathy Lewis last night. I'll be glad to answer any questions that you may have concerning the fire.

Then open the press conference to student questions, answering them from a prepared list of facts. When the questioning is complete, students write their 100-word news stories, which are evaluated for accuracy, selection, and arrangement of information.

Paul J. Beauvais, Findlay College, Findlay, Ohio

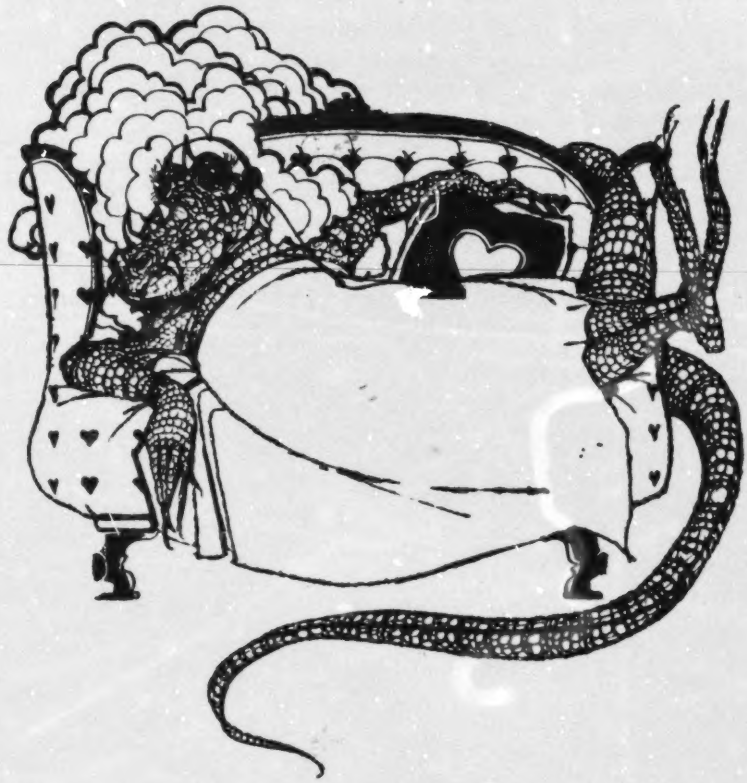
Mix-and-Match Sentences

Here is an activity that acquaints middle school students with the regularity of language and encourages them to have fun with language, rather than to fear it.

Copy the following matrix of sentences onto the chalkboard or display them with an overhead projector:

A	B	C	D
An ugly dragon	A beautiful princess	A dusty ranch hand	A punk rocker
with a scaley body	with curly blond hair	with a deeply wrinkled face	with a mohawk haircut
slithered into a dark cave	rode to the enchanted forest	walked to the bunkhouse	went to an army recruiting office
to devour a dandelion.	to find Prince Charming.	to rest after a hard day on the range.	to pose for a publicity picture.

Point out to students that each sentence, when read from top to bottom, has the same structure. It is not important at this time that students know what these structures are, just that the sentences are constructed of the same elements and that these elements are interchangeable—often with comic results. For example, mixing and matching parts of sentences A and B in a zigzag fashion produces the following sentence: An ugly dragon with curly blond hair slithered into a dark cave to find Prince Charming.



Then have each student write a matrix of four sentences with the same four-part structure. Each sentence should be different, although they may all be on a common theme—such as teachers, sports, or life on a farm. Check that each student has followed the correct format, or divide the class into small groups to read over one another's sentences.

Pass out pieces of construction paper that are four inches wide by ten inches tall. Have students divide each page into four sections by drawing

three horizontal lines across the page. Instruct students to write one sentence on each sheet of paper, with each structural element in a separate compartment and with a left margin of about one inch. Each student stacks his or her four pages together, adds a cover, and fastens the booklet with staples or glue. Students then cut each page along the horizontal lines they've drawn, being careful not to cut beyond their one-inch margin. Now students can flip through their books, combining elements of the four sentences.

Completed books can be exchanged within the class, and students can combine sentence elements individually or in small groups. Or students may share their booklets with younger students in the school. The activity may also lead to a class discussion of how the sentence parts can be interchanged to yield a completely different meaning while the sentence structure remains unchanged.

Edgar H. Thompson, Blacksburg High School, Blacksburg, Virginia

Library Scavenger Hunt

Here's an activity that helps junior high students review library search skills.

I divide the class into groups of three or four students and give each group a paper containing a long list of questions to research and columns in which to fill in the answer, the source, and the page number. I assign questions to give students background for the ideas and terms they will encounter in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* The goal is not so much to gather specific facts as to sharpen search skills in ways that are related to literary study.

Students spend one class period in the library and turn in their papers at the end of class. The following day I return the papers to each group, and students return to the library for part of the period. Then we meet as a class to discuss how the groups went about their searches. I award small prizes to the group with the most answers and to the group using the greatest variety of sources.

Here is list of questions to get you started:

1. What is a *picaresque* novel?
2. Where are Hannibal, Missouri and Florida, Missouri?
3. What was Mark Twain's real name?
4. What does the term *mark twain* mean?
5. What event marked Twain's birth and death?
6. What important river forms the Missouri-Illinois border?

7. Define *hypocrisy, satirist, temperance, reformation, gullible.*
8. Was Missouri a *slave* state or a *free* state?
9. When and where was slavery legal in the U.S.?
10. What rights did slaves have?
11. How could a slave become a free person?
12. Who was Sir Walter Scott?
13. What is colloquial speech?
14. What is *Pilgrim's Progress*?
15. What is a feud?
16. List three famous feuds.
17. What is a lynching?
18. Find a historical example of a lynching.
19. Define *bee* as in quilting bee.
20. What are characteristics of a frontier?
21. What are some American dialects?
22. Give examples of *tall tales.*
23. What were the chief occupations of Americans in 1830?
24. What were important political issues between 1830 and 1840?
25. What recreational activities were popular in 1830?
26. What was the NAACP stand on *Huckleberry Finn*?
27. What is a social critic?
28. Name some American writers who have been regarded as social critics.
29. What other pseudonym did Mark Twain use?
30. How did Twain's writing change as he became older?

Rhea Dalrymple, Ashtabula County Schools, Jefferson, Ohio

2 Literature

> Literature exists for the sake of the people—to refresh the weary, to console the sad, to hearten the dull and downcast, to increase man's interest in the world, his joy of living, and his sympathy in all sorts and conditions of man.
>
> Justice M. T. Manton (1934)

To stimulate this appreciation of classic and contemporary literature, the activities in this section encourage full involvement with and understanding of literary selections. The activities suggest techniques for introducing literary works to students: sentence-combining exercises, a preliminary examination of moral values and beliefs, and a close look at elements of fiction can help make some literary works less formidable at the outset. Such approaches to literary analysis as analogies between people and places, a comparison of theme or characters in prose and poetry, the creation of a playscript, the transformation of literature to newspaper format, and the comparison of ancient myths to their modern-day version all encourage student participation and provide a way for teachers to evaluate students' understanding of and insight into a literary work. Teacher-student contracts stimulate student interest by allowing them to select their own assignments and thus determine their own grades, and guided fantasies involve students by recreating the mood of a literary selection. Also included are some activities that pertain to specific literary works; with some modification, the techniques in these activities could be applied to other novels and short stories.

Sentence Combining as a Prereading Activity

This classroom activity introduces students to a literary work and gives them varied opportunities to practice sentence-combining skills. I've had success using the activity with several different literary works.

Before class, I write an original set of short sentences suggesting a general idea about a literary work that students are to read. Here are two examples:

Black Boy is a novel.
Richard Wright wrote *Black Boy.*
It is autobiographical.
It shows troubles.
All of us need to understand these troubles.

George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm.*
Animal Farm is a fable.
Animal Farm is a satire.
It shows something about dictators.
Dictators can be very cruel.

I also "uncombine" a sentence from the work itself to create a sentence-combining problem. For example, I took a sentence from Anton Chekhov's "The Bet"—"Capital punishment kills a man at once, but lifelong imprisonment kills him slowly"—and reworked it to read:

Punishment kills.
It kills a man.
It kills at once.
The punishment is capital.
Imprisonment kills.
It kills a man.
It kills slowly.
The imprisonment is lifelong.

Here are two other "uncombined" examples, the first from Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and the second from Orwell's *Animal Farm*:

The dog was old.
The dog got to his feet.
The dog moved slowly.
The dog moved stiffly.
The dog moved the leash.
The leash pulled.
The pulling was gentle.

The animals were amazed.
The animals were terrified.
The animals were huddling together.
The animals watched the line.
Pigs were in a line.
The line was long.
The pigs marched slowly.
The pigs marched around the yard.

In class, I display the sentence-combining problems with the overhead projector. Students write out possible combinations; then we go over the various combinations. Class discussion can demonstrate why the sentence "Richard Wright's *Black Boy* is an autobiographical novel that shows us troubles all of us need to understand" is superior to "*Black Boy* by Richard Wright is a novel that is autobiographical and that shows us troubles all of us need to understand."

We follow the same procedure with the sentence I've "uncombined" from the original work. Students suggest various combinations, and I read the original sentence from the literary work. Then we discuss the thought expressed in the sentence.

Next I make the reading assignment, confident that students already have some familiarity with the literary work.

Gary L. McLaughlin, Port Angeles High School, Port Angeles, Washington

Nine Building Blocks of Fiction

The task of analyzing a work of fiction or of creating their own short stories can seem insurmountable to some students. I have found that examining the novel or story in terms of nine components helps students to focus their thinking on elements of fiction.

I introduce the categories to students by drawing nine large boxes on the chalkboard and by discussing each of the components in relation to a novel or short story the class has read. Here are the nine building blocks and some of the main points we discuss under each:

Plot	*Setting*	*Theme*
Exposition	Time	Main idea or statement about a universal subject: love, joy, maturity, courage, jealousy, death
Complications	Place	
Climax		
Resolution		
Conflict	*Narrative Method*	*Style of Writing*
Main character's struggle against nature, technology, another character, his or her inner self	First person: I, we	Form
	Third person: he, she, they	Vocabulary
		Sentences
		Images

Characterization	*Point of View*	*Tone*
By narrator	Omniscient: narrator sees all	Sound or mood of narrator's voice: cheerful, angry, matter-of-fact, satirical, tense, humorous, tragic
By character(s): thoughts, speech, actions	Limited: major or minor character's view	
	Objective: no viewpoint	

After students have become familiar with the nine components, hand out a blank grid containing the component labels or have students make their own grids. Divide the class into small groups and have each group use the grid to analyze a recent literature assignment. When each group has identified all components of the grid, have the entire class discuss the novel or story and point out different interpretations the groups have made. Or post the grids on the bulletin board for all to read and compare.

Once students are familiar with the grid, it is also a useful prewriting aid. Pass out blank copies of the grid or again have students make their own. Provide a few of the components for the class—perhaps the setting, the conflict, and the narrative method– and have students fill in the remainder of the grid and then write a short story incorporating the nine components of their grid. Better yet, have the class select the common elements. Later, students read their stories aloud and discuss differences in the other components.

Harriet L. King, Durham Academy, Durham, North Carolina

Discovering Oneself

In preparation for understanding moral conflicts faced by characters in the literary works we are to read, I have students take a close look at some of their own beliefs, attitudes, and values and then discuss these feelings with classmates.

Early in the semester I hand out to students a list of situations involving moral choices and conflicts. Some sample situations I've had my students discuss are listed below, with the final selection depending on the particular novels, poems, and short stories we will be reading throughout the semester.

1. Your best friend borrows your literature homework. When the teacher grades the assignment, she finds that your paper and your

friend's contain identical paragraphs. She gives both papers a zero, which lowers your nine-week grade from A to B. How do you feel about your best friend now and about the teacher's actions? Will you go to the teacher and try to explain? How will you react to your friend? What values and beliefs do your actions suggest that you hold?

2. A new girl appears in school. She wears excessive makeup and dressy clothes that are much too mature looking for her age. Your crowd decides to shun her. What will you do? Why? What values are you demonstrating? How important are they to you?
3. Your father has grounded you for the next six months because you came in thirty minutes late from your Saturday night date. How would you react to the penalty? What does your reaction say about your beliefs and values? What action would you take? What would such action suggest about your values?
4. Your mother instructs you not to be friends with David any longer because he is rumored to be selling drugs and she is afraid you will be influenced by him. You have been very close to David for several years and see him as a good friend. What would be your response? Describe your attitude toward her ultimatum. How would you react? What values do your comments and decisions reflect?
5. You have just had a verbal fight with Andrea, a classmate whom you have never liked because she has been a "troublemaker" all through high school. She is a bore at parties and often tries to be the center of attention. That same night, Andrea is killed in a car accident. What would you do—contact her family to express sympathy, go to the funeral? How would you feel about having had an argument with her? What do your reactions say about your values?
6. The National Science Foundation has offered you a scholarship to a computer camp at your state university for the summer. You want to go, but you also want to play softball on your league team, and your boyfriend (girlfriend) doesn't want you to accept the scholarship. What will you do? Why? What values are illustrated through your choice?
7. You and your friend Marc have been sent to the store to purchase supplies for the school play. While the salesclerk isn't looking, you see Marc steal three tapes and hide them in a bag he is carrying. What do you say or do? Why? What values does your decision reflect?

8. You are the fifth player on your basketball team when a new student transfers to your school. He (she) was an all-state player at his (her) school and would increase the chances of your high school playing in the state tournament. How will you act toward the new student? How do you feel about him (her)? What are your options? What do these options say about your attitudes and values?

Have the class divide into groups of four or five students. Each group discusses each situation on the handout sheet, with group members indicating what beliefs, attitudes, and values they are expressing. Then a spokesperson from each group reports to the class on the group's comments, and the discussion continues with all students contributing. Stress that there is no one correct behavior or belief and that everyone has his or her own personal values.

When similar moral dilemmas arise in forthcoming literature assignments, students are better able to identify with the character who faces a moral choice and to understand why a particular choice is made.

Shirley R. Chafin, Johnson Central High School, Paintsville, Kentucky

Easing into Poetry

Obviously, not all students are overjoyed to start a poetry unit. They *think* they don't like poetry. I've been successful in easing students into poetry, step by step. They come to realize that poetry has been a pleasurable part of their lives since they were small and to recognize how poetry can express complex thoughts and emotions.

I start out by having each student bring in a copy of a favorite nursery rhyme. Each student reads his or her rhyme aloud and explains why it is a favorite. I keep a list of these pleasurable qualities on the chalkboard, including *memories, feelings,* and *associations,* and introduce such terms as *alliteration, assonance,* and *onomatopoeia.*

Next, students bring in a card with a verse on it—perhaps a valentine or a Christmas card. Students read their verse aloud and explain what they like about the verse. They recognize some of the same pleasurable qualities of the nursery rhymes and also note that the poetic form can express emotions and feelings that might be more difficult or awkward to say in prose form.

Now students are ready to tackle more mature poetry. I assemble a large selection of poetry collections, including works by poets of different time periods and with widely varying styles. Students spend one class period selecting a poem they like. At the next class meeting, students read aloud the poem they have selected and explain what they like about it. By

this time students are familiar with the structure, rhythm, oral qualities, and emotional component of poetry, and they are better able to recognize and appreciate these elements in the poetry assignments I now make.

Elizabeth Brannon, Geneva County High School, Hartford, Alabama

Literary Analogies

This activity is designed to help students develop analytical thinking skills and see relationships among such elements of literature as people, places, things, events, symbols, literary forms, vocabulary, and grammar. In addition, it introduces the sentence-replacement technique for analogy solving, which is useful for college placement exams.

After the class has completed reading a particular literary work, I have students bring books and notes to class. Individually, in groups, or as a class, students recall and list all of the people, places, things, events, and symbols in the story. I tell them to look for relationships among the listed items and to write each relationship in the form of an analogy and a statement. Here is an example from *Macbeth* I give students:

> *Analogy:* Macbeth : Duncan :: Macduff : Macbeth
>
> *Relationship:* Macbeth is a Scottish thane under the kingship of Duncan; Macduff is a Scottish thane under the kingship of Macbeth (relationship of *subject* to *king*)
>
> or
>
> Macbeth killed Duncan; Macduff killed Macbeth (relationship of *killer* to *victim*)

Then I have students use their books, notes, and lists to create their own analogies and state the particular relationship. I emphasize that the sentence sequence must remain exactly the same. Students are to remove one word and insert another word to establish the second half of the analogy. When their analogies are completed, students challenge one another to identify the relationship.

I also find analogies useful discussion starters and test items. And I encourage students to use this technique when reviewing literature or other subject areas.

Barbara L. Nelson, Punahou School, Honolulu, Hawaii

Literature Testing through Poetry

After students have been exposed to analyzing poetry, I find it useful to have them use poetry in analyzing a literary work. The exercise provides

me with an additional technique of measuring literary skills, and I receive feedback on the success of the literature program. More-able students enjoy the challenge of computing works of different genres, while less-able students may require additional classroom practice in the technique before the assignment is given.

I find poems by various artists that are parallel in theme, symbolism, setting, and so forth to a novel, short story, or play that the class has just completed. I introduce the activity to the class by handing out copies of one of the poems or by using the overhead projector. I read the poem aloud, and we discuss it briefly. I select phrases or lines from the poem and ask students to discuss how these elements are similar to or different from the recently read literary work. Then I give students a copy of another poem—or perhaps three or four so they may have a choice—and ask students how specific elements of the poem relate to elements of the literary work. For example, I might ask students to explain how the Langston Hughes poem "Dreams" relates in theme and symbolism to the Willa Cather story "Paul's Case." I'd look for students to comment that both works concern dreams and dreamers, and that both use snow symbolism to signify that for the dreamer, life without fantasy is as cold and barren as snow.

Another comparison might be made with *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles, "The Poison Tree" by William Blake, and "The Armorer" by poet Elder Olson. Students could explain how the tree in the novel might be related to Blake's poison tree and whether "the enemy" of Knowles might also correspond to the foe in the last line of Blake's poem ("My foe outstretched beneath the tree"). Olson's "clobbering the wrong guy" and the changing of insignias might relate to Gene's conflict in the novel with himself and with Phineas. And the last line of "The Armorer," which concerns killing of the enemy within, could be compared with Knowles's message that wars are created from some type of ignorance within the human heart.

Beth Graiman Kaler, Jane Long Middle School, Houston, Texas

Analysis through Oral Interpretation

Oral interpretation techniques can add a new angle to the analysis of characters in a short story. Take a segment of particularly dramatic or emotional dialogue from a story the class is to read and rewrite it as a playscript, deleting all narrative references to emotions, feelings, or motivations. Triple space between speakers so that there will be sufficient room to enter stage directions.

Have students read the story in its original form, silently or as a homework assignment, with an eye toward the characters—what they are

like and why they behave as they do. To reinforce this, students might draw up a list of adjectives describing particular characters and justify their selection of terms during the initial class discussion of the story's theme and characters.

Next, distribute the playscript of dialogue and have students work in groups of four to six to supply the stage directions: Catherine's lip trembles, Carl speaks haltingly, Christina pounds the table to accent her words. Students determine the emotions and motivations of the speakers and suggest verbal and body language techniques to reveal these qualities. After the stage directions are completed, allow about ten minutes for rehearsal.

The class reassembles to watch and evaluate performances by each of the groups. Have students discuss how the various groups expressed the characters' feelings and whether these emotions differed from one group to another.

William J. Boerst, Jamestown High School, Jamestown, New York

Blonde Runs Screaming from Cabin: Bears in Hot Pursuit

A variation of the book report allows the teacher to assess a student's understanding of the plot and theme of a novel, while the activity provides students with a nontraditional way of demonstrating this knowledge—transforming it into newspaper format.

I prepare students for the activity by devoting one class period to identifying the different components of a newspaper—news stories, feature stories, editorials, classified ads, product ads, comics, and obituaries—and by discussing the characteristics of each. To help students convert a story to newspaper format, use a model like "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" to have the class suggest possible headlines for articles and ads. Here are some headlines suggested by my students:

> Blonde Runs Screaming from Cabin: Bears in Hot Pursuit (news story)
>
> Is It True That Blondes Have More Fun? Try Glare-All Shampoo (shampoo ad)
>
> Do You Have Problems with Prowlers? (door lock ad)
>
> Children Should Learn Respect for Privacy (editorial)

Students are then given copies of a brief story, such as James Thurber's "The Unicorn in the Garden." After reading through the story, students practice creating ads, headlines, and a news story. When everyone seems at ease with this format, we turn our attention to a recently read novel.

Working alone or in pairs, students report on the novel by creating a newspaper that is factually accurate within the limits of the novel. Editorials and letters to the editor can express themes found in the novel; a news story can reveal the plot; a feature article can provide a close look at a main character. Students write headlines, stories, editorials, features, ads, and obituaries, and they determine the layout. They illustrate their newspapers with original drawings or magazine clippings. The completed newspapers are displayed for all to enjoy.

Anaruth Gordon, formerly with the Ypsilanti Public Schools, Ypsilanti, Michigan, and currently Director of Public Relations, Michigan Manufactured Housing Institute, Livonia, Michigan

Short Story Scoop

Most students enjoy performing the role of a news reporter. I find that when students apply investigative reporting techniques to the analysis of a short story, they are better able to identify the literary elements, evaluate the importance of these elements, and write up their analysis in a concise manner.

I introduce the activity by reviewing the six elements of news reporting —*who, what, when, where, why,* and *how.* I remind students that fiction is often written and read as an imitation of life and explain that students are to approach a short story they've just read as a news reporter approaches a news event. I hand out the following activity sheet to each student:

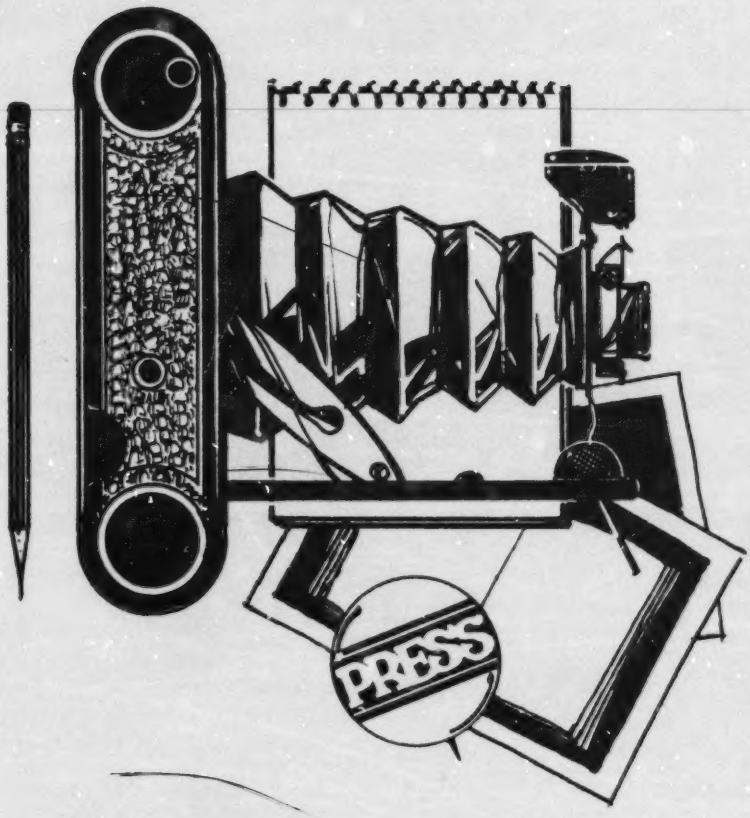
Student reporter: _____

Short story author: _____

Short story title: _____

1. The News
   a. Who was involved?
   b. What happened?
   c. When did it happen?
   d. Where did it happen?
   e. Why did it take place?
   f. How did it take place?
2. The Lead
3. The Headline

As a class, we discuss the questions and determine which person, event, place, time, method, or motive is most important in the story.



Students decide the relative importance of each news element and renumber them accordingly. Each student uses his or her list to present these elements in a lead paragraph for a newspaper article on this short story and writes an attention-grabbing headline for the article. Students read their responses aloud, and we talk about how they can make their leads and headlines accurate yet catchy. Finally, we discuss how the news elements correspond to conventional literary elements: *who*—characters; *when* and *where*—setting; *why*—theme; and *how*—plot.

Now students are prepared to report on other short stories, working alone or in small groups and perhaps writing a full news report after completing the news reporting activity sheet. Look out, Dan Rather and Barbara Walters.

Michael W. Raymond, Stetson University, DeLand, Florida

Just Sign on the Dotted Line

Students, as well as teachers, enjoy moving beyond a discussion of fiction at the literal level to a study of it at the interpretive, critical, creative, and appreciative levels. I help my students reach these upper levels by having them sign a contract to complete a number of activities suited to their interests and talents.

After students have read a major work and I feel all students understand the basics of the story, I hand out a project list like the one below and individual contract forms. These are the directions I give to students for projects pertaining to *A Tale of Two Cities.* With slight modification, the activities could be directed to other novels.

> I am not going to give an exam on *A Tale of Two Cities.* Instead, you are to draw up a contract with me in which you stipulate the activities you will complete. You can choose from the list below, or you can speak to me about your own ideas. Your grade will be determined by your project points. If you achieve 100 project points, your grade will be 100; if you complete 20 project points, your grade will be 20. Your contract must be formally written up, signed, and returned to me by Friday. You may hand in projects as they are completed; all work must be finished by __(due date)__ .
>
> | | | |
> |---|---|---|
> | 1. | Draw sketches of the main characters or the principal settings. | 5 points each |
> | 2. | List all the main characters. Write a physical description and personality sketch of each. | 10 points |
> | 3. | Present to the class an evening news show reporting on the main characters, the conflict, the resolution, and the theme of the story. | 20 points |
> | 4. | Write other plausible endings to the novel. With each, note how this change in the conclusion might change the theme. | 15 points each |
> | 5. | Rewrite an entire chapter in playscript form. | 20 points |
> | 6. | Write a letter from one character to another explaining the motive behind a particular action. | 20 points |
> | 7. | Write a summary of a possible sequel. Where do we find the main characters? What is happening to them? How does the sequel end? | 30 points |

8. Write a letter to Charles Dickens to critique the story. Be sure to mention plot progression, character development, theme, and writing style.	35 points
9. With a group of other students, act out a dramatic scene from the story.	35 points
10. Do research on the historical period of the French Revolution and write a descriptive paper.	40 points
11. Rewrite this story, in summary form, from the viewpoint of another character. How does this change the theme?	40 points
12. Write the front page of a newspaper with news articles drawn directly from *A Tale of Two Cities*. Include at least one factual news story, feature story, entertainment review, obituary, and comic strip.	60 points
13. Read another book by Dickens and compare similarities found in writing style, setting, tone, personal viewpoints on life, and themes.	70 points
14. Construct something that is symbolically significant to *A Tale of Two Cities*—perhaps a guillotine or a costume of the period.	negotiable

Theresa DiGeronimo, West Milford High School, West Milford, New Jersey

The Ancient and the Modern

An approach to comparative literature that reinforces the universality of human conflict is to have students compare ancient myths and modern treatments of these myths. Students might benefit from a comparison done in class before they start their own papers. Leaving the assignment unstructured gives students wide rein in commenting on the various works.

Here are some of the comparisons with which I've had success:

1. *Alcestis* (Euripides) and *The Cocktail Party* (T.S. Eliot)
2. *Antigone* (Sopnocles); *Antigone* (Jean Cocteau); and *Antigone* (Jean Anouilh)
3. *Bacchus* (Euripides) and *Lord of the Flies* (William Golding)

4. Centaurs and *The Centaur* (John Updike)
5. Chimera (in the myth of Bellerophon) and *Chimera* (John Barth)
6. *Electra* (Sophocles); *Electra* (Euripides); *The Libation Bearers* (Aeschylus); and *Mourning Becomes Electra* (Eugene O'Neill)
7. *Helen* (Homer); "Helen" and "Helen in Egypt" (H.D.—Hilda Doolittle); *At the Fall of an Age* (Robinson Jeffers); "The Marriage of Helena and Menelaos" (Walter Savage Landor)
8. Heracles; *Herakles* (Archibald MacLeish); and *The Labours of Hercules* (Agatha Christie)
9. Midas; "Midas" (Mary Shelley); *The Fable of Midas* (Jonathan Swift)
10. Pan; "Pan" (Oscar Wilde); "Hymn of Pan" (Percy Shelley); "Pan with Us" (Robert Frost); and "A Musical Instrument" (Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

Nancy A. Mavrogenes, Chicago Board of Education, Chicago, Illinois

A Modern-Day Canterbury

One way to help students understand that great literature is timeless is to have them recreate the work in a modern setting. Students learn that the "classics" are adaptable to an updating, and they also develop a greater appreciation for the creative processes of the author.

I've used this activity successfully with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales.* After students have read the tales and we have discussed them in class, I announce that each student is responsible for creating an updated tale. The class selects the time and place for the tales—usually an indefinite future time when students have graduated and established themselves in future careers. A possible meeting place is Dulles Airport as the travelers await a flight to Canterbury, England.

Students select an occupation they think they might be pursuing at the time of the trip. Careers can range from computer operator to cosmetologist to physician to carpenter to a more futuristic career. Students take on the identity of their character and write a descriptive tale about that character. Each tale is to have a moral, and stories may range from relationships with employers to personal experiences to total fantasy. To set the stage for the tale, students write a prologue in which they describe the physical characteristics and personality traits of their character. Students choose whether to write their accounts in verse form or prose form.

The prologues and tales are read aloud, and other students make specific suggestions for revision. Each student then makes a final copy of

his or her prologue and tale and illustrates them with photographs, clippings, or drawings of the character. The polished versions can be compiled into a book or displayed on the bulletin board for all to enjoy.

Julia B. Akers, Arnold R. Burton Vocational-Technical School, Salem, Virginia

The Playbill's the Thing

An art project can be an effective finale to a unit on Shakespeare. I find the interdisciplinary activity reinforces the universality of Shakespeare, and it gives students practice in summarizing plays and in recognizing themes.

I gather a range of art supplies: sheets of construction paper in vivid colors, posterboard, colored pens and felt-tip markers, brushes, water cups, tempera paint, and letter stencils. I also collect numerous copies of advertising promotions for Shakespeare's plays: calendars, photos, playbills, and programs. I try to include French, German, Spanish, and Russian playbills if I can find them. I display the promotional materials and discuss their purpose and composition, explaining that familiarity with the plot and themes of the play is essential to effective advertising and to producing an accurate program.

Then I instruct students to construct a playbill for an imaginary production of *Julius Caesar,* or whatever Shakespearean play the class has just read. I stress that the image should be representative rather than too detailed and that the playbill should display the name *Julius Caesar* plus a significant caption. I discuss the effects that can be accomplished through collage, cartoon, or silhouette, and I suggest that some students might employ an artistic style such as Pre-Raphaelite, Impressionistic, or Photo-Realistic or might experiment with various scripts or lettering. I display the completed playbills on the bulletin board where all the students can view them.

Anita J. Fisher, Seabreeze Senior High School, Daytona Beach, Florida

Classroom Court for *Lord of the Flies*

One effective way for students to evaluate the events in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is to establish a classroom court in which Roger's responsibility for Piggy's death is judged.

A week before the trial, students volunteer for or are assigned the following roles: judge, prosecuting attorney and several assistant attorneys,

defense attorney and several assistant attorneys, Roger, Ralph, Jack, Sam, Eric, Henry, Percival, and members of the jury.

The following day the prosecuting attorney reads to the class the specific charge against Roger. The attorneys have the remainder of the week to line up supporting witnesses and to prepare their cases, but they may not approach members of the jury.

The trial opens with the prosecuting attorney and the defense attorney each delivering a two-minute opening statement. The prosecuting attorney, or one of the assistants, then calls the first witness, who is sworn in and questioned for up to six minutes. The defense attorney, or one of the assistants, cross-examines the witness if he or she desires. Then the first witness for the defense is called and questioned for up to six minutes, and the prosecuting attorney has the opportunity to cross-examine the witness. The prosecution and defense continue to call witnesses until ten minutes remain in the class period; then they each have two minutes for a summary statement.

In the remaining minutes the jury members meet for their instructions. Each is to consider the testimony and the attorneys' arguments and to reach a decision on Roger's guilt or innocence before class the next day. Jury members should not discuss the trial with one another. The judge's homework is to prepare two statements—one a reaction to Roger being found innocent, and the other a reaction to a guilty verdict and an appropriate sentence.

On the following day, the members of the jury gather, and each turns in to the jury foreman a paper ballot indicating that Roger is "innocent" or "guilty." A simple majority will determine the jury's verdict. (In the case of a tie, the jury will discuss the evidence and vote a second time. If the tie remains, the verdict will be innocent.) The foreman announces the verdict, and the judge comments on the verdict, imposing a sentence on Roger if he was found guilty.

When the trial is over, each member of the class writes a journalistic account of the trial from one of the following viewpoints: for the defendant, against the defendant, objective, or sensational. The accounts are read aloud, and the class discusses the different treatments of the same facts.

If videotape equipment is available, record the trial and the presentation of the verdict. Students always enjoy viewing themselves, and the tape provides an opportunity for self-critiques of their performances, including such areas as speech patterns, voice volume, and clarity of thought.

Joseph E. Ciciotte, Conard High School, West Hartford, Connecticut

A Little Twain and a Lot of Twine

Tall tales (or *yarns*, as Mark Twain called them) provide a creative outlet for students' favorite fantasies and excuses. Have students read several

yarns aloud in class. "The Old Ram Yarn," "The Buffalo Yarn," and "The Old Ram Yarn Retold" are popular and available in a number of anthologies. Have students list and discuss the characteristics and structure of a yarn, being certain to include

1. oral narrative
2. single speaker
3. improvisation
4. colloquial language

5. episode
6. ordinary characters
7. most activities normal
8. humor cumulative and dependent on narrator's skill at passing off improbable events as normal

Then have students form groups of three to five students and talk about their own use of tall tales and outrageous excuses. One student acts as the recorder as the group brainstorms a list of excuses and boasts. During the next few class periods, students develop a yarn employing many of these exaggerations. Each group reads its yarn aloud to the class; students critique the yarns and suggest revisions. The groups meet once more to produce their final versions of the yarns, which might be displayed for other students in the school to read.

Wendy F. Weiner, Annandale High School, Annandale, Virginia

Guided Fantasies

Lead students on a visual journey through the mind and let them mentally experience a totally different mood or setting. The technique, borrowed from counseling, provides an effective introduction to a poem or story as students create images found in the literary work. It is a right-brain experience for what is essentially a left-brain process—reading. This combining of brain hemispheres allows students to use all their faculties in pursuit of an author's meaning.

Have students relax and get comfortable. They might close their eyes so they can "see" their images without distraction. Explain to students that you will take them on a guided fantasy and suggest that they remain receptive to all ideas or images that come to mind. They need not name or label these pictures or feelings. The point is to recognize and experience these sensations and to be able to recall and reexperience them during the story or poem.

I use the following guided fantasy with Edgar Allen Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" since understanding the mood of this story is essential and since students may need some help with the vocabulary and symbolism. With music playing in the background (Ravel's *La Valse* would be a good choice), I slowly and quietly read the following text to students, allowing them time to develop images:

> Try to remember a place where you've been—perhaps a lake or a mountain—where you felt very peaceful and calm and safe. Now imagine that something happens; you are gripped by fear. Feel the

> fear—it frightens you immeasurably—you feel somehow as if you may perish. You see death. What does it look like? What color is it? Allow yourself to be completely surrounded by this fear of death. Now try to escape this fear—run from it, find some friends who will help you forget it. Feel the relief as you enjoy yourself with your friends. Go with your friends to a new place where you will be safe. Where is the place? What colors are there? Try to see the colors—how do they make you feel? What do you and your friends do here to escape death? Suddenly you hear something that reminds you of death and rekindles your fear. What is it that you hear? Feel the sound and the sense of foreboding it generates. Do you ignore it? You feel yourself in this place enjoying yourself, yet somehow you cannot escape the sense of foreboding. It's almost as if you were walking a tightrope, enjoying your steps on the rope and being in the air above it all, but knowing you might fall. Try to keep this feeling of suspension as we begin to read the story.

We discuss students' feelings briefly, talking about fear, foreboding, and suspense. I assign the story, suggesting that it represents in words the journey that students have taken in their mind. Then, when the reading is complete, we discuss the imagery and symbolism in the story.

A follow-up activity is to have students write their own guided fantasy for a favorite story.

Margaret A. Bacon, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Olympian Matchup

As a conclusion to a unit on mythology, I have students match Olympian gods and goddesses with a list of twentieth-century occupations. It helps me evaluate students' understanding of the Greek heroes, and students enjoy the contemporary twist.

Here are the directions I give to students:

> The column on the left lists Greek gods and goddesses. All names should be familiar to you. The column on the right indicates possible occupations that the gods and goddesses might have if they lived on Earth today. Find an occupation for each Olympian and give reasons for your selection.
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | ___ a. Zeus | 1. services furnaces and fireplaces |
> | ___ b. Hera | 2. inspector of mines |
> | ___ c. Poseidon | 3. computer programmer |

___ d. Athena
___ e. Hephaestus
___ f. Hades
___ g. Aphrodite
___ h. Hermes
___ i. Dionysius
___ j. Hestia
___ k. Artemis
___ l. Apollo
___ m. Ares
___ n. Demeter

4. Sears employee
5. butcher
6. home economics teacher
7. Federal Express employee
8. professional boxer
9. architect
10. governor
11. teaches macramé and pottery
12. manager of a vineyard
13. math teacher
14. General Mills employee
15. wildlife conservation officer
16. operates a munitions plant
17. scuba diver
18. editor of a men's entertainment magazine
19. runs a tanning salon

Nancy A. Mavrogenes, Chicago Board of Education, Chicago, Illinois

The following answers are given as suggestions only since the duties and responsibilities of the gods and goddesses vary somewhat according to the reference consulted and since there is some overlap in the provinces of many of the gods and goddesses—Ed.

Answers: a—10, b—6, c—17, d—11, e—16, f—2, g—18, h—7, i—12, j—1, k—15, l—19, m—8, n—14.

3 Prewriting and Writing

> The desire to write grows with writing.
>
> Desiderius Erasmus

But getting those initial thoughts onto paper can be a difficult task for students. The activities in this section are designed to provoke interest, build students' confidence in their writing skills, and stimulate the flow of words and ideas. The activities guide students in selecting a journal topic, developing sentence-combining skills, writing for a particular audience, preparing numerous descriptive paragraphs or papers, experimenting with figurative language, and creating verse.

Descriptive Portraits

One way for students to practice descriptive and concise writing is in writing paragraphs about one another. An additional benefit is that students get to know more about their classmates, so you might try this activity early in the semester.

Ask students to interview someone they don't know particularly well. This is difficult to do in some classes; just make certain that best friends don't pair up. Explain that students should use the interviews to gather positive facts that make each person special: unique physical and personality traits, interests, hobbies, skills, achievements, talents, and honors. Using this interview data, students describe their partner in a short paragraph. For example:

> Multitalented Hunk of Man
>
> He is a handsome 18-year-old, dark skinned, about 6 feet tall, with a glowing smile and bold brown eyes filled with laughter. He was born with the talent of being able to repair almost anything, and making money is one of his favorite hobbies; spending it is another. In the future he plans to be a skilled engineer, make lots of money, and travel.

Students read their descriptive portraits aloud, and the other students try to determine the identity of the person described in each paragraph. A possible follow-up is to use peer editing to spot and correct mechanical errors.

Judy Mednick, Polytechnic High School, Long Beach, California

Alphabet Journal

Students are sometimes stumped when it comes to selecting a topic for their journal writing. To provide them with ideas, I've developed two alphabetical lists of possible subjects. I schedule in-class writing sessions three times a week, with students writing no more than a third of a page each session. I collect their journals every three weeks and make ample personal comments on their ideas but make no markings for mechanics. My lists suggest fifty-two topics, and students rotate through each list twice during the course. Substitute topics can be selected at any time as long as students stay within the general category and pick a topic with the assigned alphabet letter. For example, instead of *baseball,* they could write about *backpacking, billiards,* or *boxing.*

Here are the topics I suggest:

Everyday Life		*Feelings and Emotions*	
Art	Nations	Anger	Nosiness
Baseball	Outdoors	Bravery	Optimism
Cars	Parents	Confusion	Panic
Daughters	Questions	Dreams	Quiet
Energy	Racism	Emotion	Rudeness
Fairs	School	Fear	Success
Government	TV	Grief	Temper
Home	Underworld	Happiness	Understanding
Insects	Violence	Illness	Victory
Jokes	Weather	Joy	Wondering
Keepsakes	X-rated	Kindness	X—the Unknown
Luck	Youth	Love	Yearning
Music	Zoos	Meanness	Zest

Tim Scannell, Westwood High School, Mesa, Arizona

Assumptions

I designed the following activity to demonstrate to students that we interfere with effective problem solving by taking something for granted,

and to improve students' problem-solving skills by providing experiences in challenging assumptions.

I explain to the class that in dealing effectively with any problem it is important not to be locked in to preconceived ideas or opinions. I state that there are numerous examples in real life or in literature where someone's ability to solve problems was effected by his or her assumptions. I might cite as an example Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman,* who clings to the assumption that if a man is well liked and personally attractive, he will be successful; as a result, Loman is unable to deal with his present life. Or I might mention Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie,* who cannot deal with the real problems her children face because she still lives under the illusions and assumptions of her youth.

Next I draw three columns on the chalkboard and label them *Character, Setting,* and *Story Line.* I ask the class to give examples from literature or real life that illustrate assumptions that people hold, and we determine which of the three categories each assumption falls under. For the category *Character,* someone might suggest that in *Native Son* the police do not initially consider Bigger Thomas a suspect because they assume he is not intelligent enough to invent a ransom note. An assumption pertaining to *Setting* might be Clym Yeobright in *Return of the Native,* who returns to Egdon Heath with misleading assumptions about life in his native region. And an assumption about *Story Line* might be the traditional tale of boy meets girl, loses girl, gets girl back, and lives happily ever after with her. Continue to elicit examples of assumptions until there are several in each of the three columns.

Then I divide the class into three groups and give each a separate assignment. Group 1 is to discuss from all possible angles the assumptions on the chalkboard about characters; group 2, the assumptions about settings; and group 3, story line. When groups have had sufficient time to discuss the examples in their assigned category, a spokesperson from each group reads aloud some of the comments from the group discussion to instigate full class discussion. From the examples cited, I make the generalization that an inability or unwillingness to challenge assumptions can make it difficult for us to look objectively at problems—personal problems, literary problems, or problems of society.

Judith Colocotronis, Lake Braddock Secondary School, Burke, Virginia, and William R. Martin, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia

Putting It All Together

Here's an activity that encourages students to generate sentences and paragraphs from their own short sentences. Students use their sentence-combining skills while revising their own writing.

Ask students to reflect for a few minutes and then to write a list of about twenty short sentences that describe aspects of their rooms at home, their lockers at school, a single cubic foot of the classroom, or that pertain to another subject that you have selected. Working in pairs, students check each other's work for completeness and make any necessary adjustments. The pairs read through each list of sentences and assign a capital letter to those sentences that they feel can be combined together. They may also decide that some sentences do not pertain to the subject and should be eliminated.

Then the students work individually, experimenting with combining their base sentences together in a variety of ways. Students again meet with their partners, and together they decide which sentence combinations are most effective. They determine a logical sequence for the sentences and place appropriate numbers in the margin. At this point students may notice gaps that affect the unity or coherence of their potential paragraphs. Urge them to fill these gaps with transitional phrases or sentences.

Again working individually, students rewrite their sentences as a paragraph, making necessary adjustments in wording or order. Students return to their partners for peer response to their paragraphs and edit as needed. The final paragraphs are read aloud to the entire class.

John W. Swope, Lansing Community College, Lansing, Michigan

Avoiding Past Mistakes

To help prevent the repetition of past composition errors, use a small notebook or file box to record student errors. When grading writing assignments, keep a separate page or file card for each student and make a record of all misspellings, grammatical errors, or problems in word usage that each student had. Point out these same problems to each student when returning the composition or during a writing conference. Ask students to keep a similar record and to consult it before starting subsequent writing assignments. This diagnosis-and-prescription approach tailors instruction in mechanics and spelling to the needs of each student. It's more work—but it's worth it.

Jack Van, Johnston City High School, Johnston, Illinois

Writing for an Audience

Writing for a particular audience for a particular purpose is an effective assignment for producing clear, concise student compositions.

Bring to class a common object such as a sprinkling can, a stapler, a necktie, or a paperweight. Have students form small groups of four or

five students and give each group a different set of instructions for writing about the object. T've had success with the following directions to students:

1. Examine the object and describe it so that your reader can walk into a store and pick it out from all others similar to it.
2. Write a memo to your superior at the office convincing him or her that this object should be purchased for all the employees in your company.
3. Explain to someone who has never seen this object how to use it efficiently.
4. You are an archaeologist two hundred years from now. Write in your journal about this object you have just unearthed.
5. Suppose you came to school and discovered you *were* the object. How would you spend your day?
6. Tell a story about the object to a kindergarten class.

Each group writes a paragraph according to its directions; then a reader from each group reads just the paragraph aloud. The class must guess what each group's instructions were and for what audience the writing is intended.

Shirley Vaux, Valley View Junior High School, Edina, Minnesota

Describe That Face

This activity gives students practice at developing a paragraph by formulating a topic sentence, using specific detail, and maintaining unity.

Cut out and number pictures of faces from magazines. They should all be the same sex, and you may find women's faces more plentiful than men's. Give each student a different picture and have everyone write a paragraph describing the face in the picture. Stress to students that they should select those details that make the particular face different from all others so that anyone reading the description could identify the correct photograph. Allow twenty minutes or so for the writing.

Then collect the pictures and display them so they're visible to all students—perhaps on the chalkboard at the front of the room. Students take turns reading their descriptions aloud while the rest of the class tries to identify the face described. Students can make their guesses out loud, or, to maintain suspense, they can record the face number on a sheet of paper and compare answers when all descriptions have been read.

Talk about which details are most helpful to the listeners and which kinds of statements provide little clue. Point out any effective topic sen-

tences that tie all the details together and those paragraphs whose details create a unified description. Then have each student write a topic sentence for his or her magazine face that states the student's overall impression of the face. The descriptive paragraphs can be revised to incorporate the topic sentence.

Dorothy A. Winsor, Detroit College of Business, Dearborn, Michigan

Stepping Back into the Past

A memory or experience in the past can help students produce specific details in writing. I use this activity with tenth-grade students, but it may be adapted for other levels.

I hand out blank sheets of paper, reassuring worried students that this is not a quiz. I tell them to relax, perhaps closing their eyes, and to think back to when they were seven years old. I ask them to picture themselves sitting in their bedroom and looking around the room. They take a few minutes to bring back this memory. Then I have them map the floor plan of their room in the center of the paper. They mark the placement of doors and windows and sketch in the furniture as it was positioned in the

room. They indicate the color of the curtains and of the paint or wallpaper and dig up other memories from the past: pennants or posters hanging on the wall, dolls or stuffed animals placed on the bed, favorite books in the bookcase, plants on the dresser, toys and games in the toy chest. Students mark these details on their maps or make a listing underneath. They note as many specific details as possible.

The next day I hand students another blank sheet of paper and have them again return to the time when they were seven years old. This time, however, they don't stay in their bedroom: they open the front door, go outside, and take a mental walk around the block. Students then draw a map of their neighborhood as it was when they were seven years old. They include street plans for two or three blocks in each direction and mark all special places on the map: the house of a best friend, names of next-door neighbors, a favorite hiding place, a park, a store, the house of a crotchety neighbor, a steep hill for sliding and sledding, a goldfish pond, a fort, a shortcut to a friend's house, the concrete sidewalk square where all the neighbor kids signed their name.

The third day, with their maps before them and their memories fresh, students tackle one of the following writing assignments:

1. Describe your bedroom to someone who has never visited your house. Include all details that you can remember and indicate the general mood created by the furnishings and decorations.
2. Take a visitor on a tour of your neighborhood. Point out what were your favorite places and why they were special to you.
3. Choose an object in your room about which you had strong feelings. Describe your emotions and why you had such feelings.
4. Choose a person or place in your neighborhood and indicate all your memories about this person or place.

Mark F. Goldberg, Shoreham-Wading River High School, Shoreham, New York

A Dream House

Looking ahead to a future home gives students practice in using descriptive details, while it stimulates their imaginations as well.

Select several real estate ads from the newspaper to photocopy, or have students bring in an ad for their dream house. Explain that they are to study the ad and then envision the entire house, basing their mental picture on the facts given in the ad. Once students have a clear mental image of the house, have them select one room to describe in detail. Their

written description should include: architectural style, shape of the room, placement of doors and windows, floor covering, drapes or curtains, wallpaper or color of walls, furniture, light fixtures, artwork, bric-a-brac, the view from the window, and perhaps a calico cat snoozing before a fire in the fireplace.

Thomas M. Cobb, Ritenour High School, St. Louis, Missouri

Hometown Travel Guide

This writing project helps students get to know their community better and appreciate the activities and services the community offers. Students also learn to work cooperatively on a group project and are encouraged to write clearly, accurately, and concisely. The project will take about five weeks to complete, and before initiating it you should obtain your principal's permission to solicit donations from the owners of local points of interest, to hold a fund-raising event, and to print a pamphlet.

Ask students to describe some of the places they've vacationed and to discuss why people take vacations. Talk about whether people might vacation in your community and have students suggest what your town or city can offer tourists, particularly teenagers. Then make the assignment: the class is to produce a pamphlet for teenage visitors.

These are the steps that my class followed. You and your students may wish to modify these procedures somewhat.

1. Class members survey 100 teenagers to learn their favorite restaurants, stores, parks, and other places of interest.
2. The class tabulates the results. Students select the top fifteen or twenty attractions for an in-depth description and make a list of the other attractions. Or they divide the attractions into categories and select the top two or three in each category for further description.
3. Divide the class into groups of two or three students and have each group select several local points of interest to describe in detail.
4. The class determines the type of information to list for the featured attractions, perhaps including hours, prices, features, and location.
5. Each group role-plays interviews with the owners or managers of the various points of interest so that students will feel comfortable talking to these people.
6. Students conduct interviews with the owners or managers of the local attractions. (This step may be difficult if private transporta-

tion is necessary, but perhaps the interviews could take place over the weekend. Or interviews might be conducted by phone from either the school or a student's home.)

7. When the interviews are completed, each group writes a descriptive paragraph about their local attractions. Have one group write an introduction to the guide, or have the class as a whole do the writing.
8. Student groups exchange descriptions and offer suggestions for revision. Then the descriptions are returned to the writers and revised accordingly.
9. One student group investigates the cost of printing the pamphlet in the graphic arts department or having a local printer do the work. If the budget is limited, the students should also determine the price for photocopying the pamphlet from a typed copy.
10. Student groups meet a second time with the owners or managers of the featured local attractions to show them the final copy of the descriptive paragraph and to solicit donations for printing the pamphlet. (Some businesspeople might prefer at this time to sign a written commitment to donate.) Students prepare a list of those businesses agreeing to help with the printing costs and include this list at the end of their pamphlet.
11. Students conduct a name-the-pamphlet contest and vote to determine the winning title.
12. Artistic volunteers prepare a cover and a map showing the location of the main points of interest.
13. The class plans a fund-raising event to help with the printing costs—perhaps a paperback book sale for the other students or a community car wash. Proceeds from the event and the amount of business donations received will determine whether the pamphlet is to be printed or photocopied.
14. The class determines the final layout for the pamphlet and turns it over to the printer. If the pamphlet is to be photocopied, volunteers type the final copy and the class helps with the proofreading.
15. When the pamphlet is printed, class members distribute copies to all businesses and other places of interest mentioned in the pamphlet. Student groups contact the Chamber of Commerce, local hotels and motels, and other local organizations that may wish to distribute the pamphlet free of charge.

Kay Prosser, Wisconsin Dells Junior High School, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

Grab-Bag Descriptions

Everyday items can be the subject of descriptive paragraphs. I assemble a collection of common household items and place each item in a small paper bag. Some of the objects I've used are listed below:

bottle cap	costume jewelry
fuse	pen or pencil
cotton swab	plastic refrigerator dish
cotton ball	measuring spoons
salt or pepper shaker	measuring cups
coin	Christmas ornament
eraser	spool of thread
pliers	styrofoam coffee cup
pot holder	champagne cork
can opener	comb
light bulb	toothbrush
nail file	small rock
silverware	stapler
pot scrubber	roll of tape

I number each bag and record which item is placed in which numbered bag. Then I tie each bag shut.

I explain to students that they are each going to receive a paper bag containing a common object. They are to describe the object by feeling through the bag—they are not to open up the bag. Even if they immediately recognize the object in their bag, they are not permitted to identify it, only to describe it. I explain that they can write their paragraph from the viewpoint of the object inside the bag, or they can prepare an objective account. Then I distribute the bags and give students twenty minutes to write their descriptive paragraphs.

When the time for feeling and squeezing the bags and for writing the descriptions is up, students read their paragraphs aloud and the class tries to identify the object. Once the identification has been made, students discuss particularly strong aspects of each descriptive paragraph and suggest ways to make the description more accurate.

There are several variations on this assignment. Each student could swap paragraphs with his or her writing partner, and the two could work together to revise each paragraph. Or the class could divide into groups and each group could write a joint descriptive paragraph. Another variation is for students to prepare a short speech describing their grab-bag object to the class rather than to write a paragraph.

Deborah Little, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois

Just Do What I Say

Writing the "how-to" essay gives students practice in producing logical and concise directions. First, make or bring in simple line drawings of such objects as a cat, an ice cream cone, or a small train. A child's coloring book or a craft book is a good source. Have students form small groups of four or five students and have one student per group be the instruction-giver. Each instruction-giver selects a line drawing and tells the other group members how to draw the same object—but no one may reveal what the object is. The instruction-giver may only give directions for moving a pencil on a sheet of paper. The resulting drawings may bear no resemblance to the intended object and thus stimulate the students to think about the importance of accurate directions.

Now, it's time to move to the individual writing assignment. Students are to prepare an illustrated instruction sheet for a how-to project that will be performed or assembled by a classmate. Each writer is to select a project that can be completed within a class period and to assemble the necessary materials for the task. Such projects might include learning to knit, French-braiding hair, restringing a guitar, building a birdhouse, making an origami bird, or mixing no-bake cookies. Let students know in advance how messy or how noisy the projects may be and encourage them to make use of inexpensive materials found around the house. Examining printed instruction sheets will help identify some of the pitfalls for students to avoid: ambiguous language, improper order of steps, poorly labeled diagrams, failure to include warnings or cautions, and confused format.

On the assigned day, each student receives an instruction sheet and materials for performing a task or assembling an object. The instructions must be followed exactly—students are to do just what the directions say. As the end of class nears, students view one another's completed projects and see how instructive their own set of directions was. A possible follow-up assignment is to have students write a letter of complaint or praise for the instructions each received.

Tamalyn Glasser, Rowan County High School, Morehead, Kentucky

Four Approaches to the Same Shoe

Here's an activity that helps students distinguish among four main modes of writing by presenting them in one class period.

Select a personal object belonging to a student to use as a model—perhaps a running shoe or a backpack. Have students take out four sheets of paper and label the first *Explanation.* Allow students five minutes to

explain the nature of the running shoe in a solid paragraph that identifies, classifies, or analyzes the shoe. Ask for a few volunteers to read their expositions and discuss them briefly, making certain that all students have written an explanatory paragraph.

Students label their second sheet *Description.* Have them use all five senses to describe the shoe: hearing, tasting, seeing, feeling, and even smelling. This last sense should make them eager to write. After about five minutes, call for volunteers to read their paragraphs aloud.

The third sheet, labeled *Narration,* is for a story involving the shoe—either as a prop or as a character. Again allow about five minutes for the writing and some time for discussion.

Students label their fourth sheet *Argumentation* and are instructed to convince a reader of the truth or falsity of a particular thesis somehow involving the shoe—why students wear running shoes or why this particular shoe is harmful to its owner's feet, for example. Caution students to present only one side of an issue and to base their argument on logic. Have a few students read their completed paragraphs aloud.

Conclude the activity by reviewing the four writing modes and by discussing similarities and differences among them.

Joan Winner, Hillsboro High School, Hillsboro, Ohio

Writing to the Nation

This activity combines letter writing with a bit of geography. Bring in individual state road maps and have each student select a different state. Students use the population listings to find a city or town of equivalent size to their own. Each student drafts a letter to the Chamber of Commerce in the selected town requesting information about schools, a city map, and brochures about the region. Letters are read aloud, critiqued by the class, revised, and then mailed.

When the requested information arrives, students draft a letter to their counterpart class in a high school in their new town or city and request more personal information about the school and community. Each letter-writer prepares a brief description of himself or herself and sends a photograph if available. Students also describe their high school and include information about the points of interest, geographical features, history, climate, ethnic background, and economic makeup of their own community. This information can be gathered from parents and other community members and from library research that includes newspapers, local histories, and reports of local government agencies. These letters are also critiqued by the class, revised, and mailed.

Class members exchange responses to their letters and submit one or two of the most interesting to the school paper. If someone receives a personal reply from a student, the class as a whole might draft a letter in response. Or if several personal letters are received, students might work in small groups to answer the letters. A follow-up assignment might include an essay evaluating and measuring students' personal responses to the letter-writing project.

Nancy Rutledge, Southwest Texas Junior College, Uvalde, Texas

A Newsworthy Day

A library research activity has more appeal when it involves students personally. This activity has students research the events taking place on the day when they were born. They also interview a parent to find out what was going on in their own household.

Students spend several class periods in the library collecting information. They are to locate newspapers from the day or week in which they were born and magazines from that week or month. Students are to gather information on local, national, and international events and on topics of interest or controversy at that time—such as a presidential election campaign, a local baseball team's winning season, or different stands on a controversial issue like the Vietnam War. Also of interest are advertisements and articles on the kinds of cars, clothing, entertainment, and so forth that were popular at that time. With younger students especially, be certain that they are familiar with the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* and with the use of microfiche, if your library uses this format. Students may also need to use a larger local library to locate appropriate references.

I hand out several library worksheets to each student and have students collect information from each source on a separate worksheet. Students list the title of the magazine or newspaper and the publication date at the top of the worksheet and then research the following topics, listing the article name, author if given, and page number for each bit of information they gather:

1. Major headlines (newspapers) or front cover headlines (magazines)
2. National events
3. International events
4. Local events (newspapers)
5. Editorial page topics

6. National and local sports events
   a. Seasonal sports
   b. Standings in leagues
   c. Who is playing what?
7. Entertainment
   a. Movies
   b. Theater
   c. Performers
   d. Music and groups
8. Fashions
   a. Advertisements
   b. Feature articles
9. Food news
10. Science and medical news
11. Economic news
12. Advertisments
    a. What kind?
    b. Subject matter
    c. Types and styles
13. Comic strips (newspapers)
    a. Comparison of quality
    b. Any still running in papers today?
14. Other topics or items of note

For information on events closer to home, students interview a parent about this very important date in history. The class determines a list of questions, such as the following:

1. Where was I born?
2. What was the date and the day of the week?
3. What time?
4. What were my birth weight and length?
5. What were you doing when you discovered that I was about to be born (or when you learned that I was ready for adoption)?
6. What do you remember about the events surrounding my birth (or adoption)?
7. How did you decide on my name?
8. What do you remember most about my first week at home?

Students might also interview, in person or by phone, a grandparent or other close relative or friend to gather information about this important date in history from another perspective.

Once the interviews and library research are complete, students combine personal and historical information to write a descriptive paper on their birthdate and include a reference list. A follow-up assignment might include an essay comparing some of the differences between the present day and the period in which the students were born or an essay on "What would be different if I were growing up today."

V. Nell Jones, Clovis High School, Clovis, New Mexico

Dramas of Aging

With today's mobile society, teenagers often live far from their grandparents and have little interaction with other older people. Consequently, they lack experiences that might increase understanding, knowledge, and respect for the elderly.

Begin the activity by gathering materials and information on the biological, sociological, and psychological aspects of aging. Include short stories, poems, news stories, and magazine articles and perhaps make reading assignments prior to the discussion. Have students discuss the aging process and the various problems and advantages of growing older. Many will have seen the film *On Golden Pond* and will be familiar with the physical ailments that growing older can bring yet be aware of the special bond that can develop between the old and the young. Students might also interview active and productive older citizens, either individually or as a class.

Have the class form groups of four to six students. Each group writes a skit based on the elderly and acts it out before the entire class. Such dramatizations might deal with an older person forced to retire against his or her wishes, with a grandparent whose children and grandchildren aren't prepared for changes in the older person's health, or with an older person who turns to counseling runaway children after retirement from the work force. After the skits have been presented, have the class discuss the various treatments of old age and identify myths about aging. Have students consider what they can do in their own lives to keep those myths from being accepted as fact.

A further writing assignment might be a descriptive essay on students' feelings when interacting with elderly people or when viewing the class skits.

Helen B. Tulis, Avondale High School, Avondale, Georgia

You Don't Have to Be a Conformist

Here's an activity that helps students recognize the softening of rigid role models based on sex or family background. It also helps students to develop interviewing techniques and to use information gathered in interviews as the basis for descriptive essays.

Discuss with students some of the men and women in literature, in history, and in contemporary society who have not conformed to the standard sex roles of the period in which they lived or to the roles expected by their families. Nineteenth-century England wasn't ready for a female novelist, so Mary Ann Evans wrote under the pen name George Eliot. Geraldine Ferraro broke with tradition in our era by becoming the first woman to run for vice president on a major party ticket. Discuss what qualities make all these nonconformists unique.

Have students select someone to interview—perhaps a neighbor or relative—who is at least sixty years old and who has not chosen a traditional role in life. Perhaps there's someone whose family was disappointed when he chose not to join the family law firm and started a watch repair business instead; or a woman who became a physician and thus defied the stereotype of females not having careers; or perhaps a less dramatic example of a nonconformist.

Working together, students compile a list of possible questions to ask during their interviews that encourage interviewees to discuss why they chose a nontraditional or nonconformist role, what pressures they faced from family or friends, and what rewards they have gathered from their nontraditional lifestyle. Questions might also ask interviewees about how general attitudes and expectations about rigid roles have changed in recent years. Students should tape-record their interview if equipment is available or take notes.

After the interviews have been conducted, each student writes a descriptive essay on his or her subject and shares a copy with this person. A follow-up activity might include a further discussion of traditional and nontraditional roles and of any differences students would make in their lives if they were the opposite sex.

Barbara Keenan, Fort Morgan High School, Fort Morgan, Colorado

A Creative Writing Unit

Here is a writing sequence in which students work individually at their own pace. Throughout the unit, the teacher provides written or verbal instructions as well as the materials for developing creative writing skills.

At the outset, I give students the following instructions:

Directions to the Student: You are to work at your own pace in completing activities in the sequence given below. Check with the teacher before beginning each unit to make certain you understand all the assignments, and turn in each unit to the teacher for grading before moving to the next unit.

Grading: You must successfully complete five units to earn an A, four units for a B, three for a C, and two for a D. All assignments must be graded "Satisfactory" before you move to the next unit. Creativity receives high priority, but correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling are also important.

1. Creative Sentences
   a. Write ten sentences beginning "Love is . . ." and ten starting with "Happiness is . . ."; then design a colorful poster displaying one of your sentences as a caption.
   b. Write ten good news/bad news jokes. (The good news is they put out the fire next door. The bad news is now your house is on fire!)
   c. Write ten brief jokes that tell stories. Each must have the elements of a story—characters, problem, climax, resolution. (A hobo is arrested and pleads guilty. The judge says, "Ten dollars or ten days." The hobo says, "I'll take the ten dollars.")
2. Inanimate Objects
   a. After the teacher's explanation of *literal* and *figurative* analogies, bring in an object and write one paragraph describing it using a literal analogy; then write a second paragraph using a figurative analogy.
   b. Write five brief eulogies of inanimate objects. (Captain Coat died today, leaving behind two buttons and a hood.)
   c. Write two or three pages of dialogue for two inanimate characters in play form—such as two Zodiac signs. This script could be read aloud to the class with a partner.
3. Moods and Themes
   a. Move to the area of the classroom containing the tape recorder and tapes; choose a tape to listen to and write one or two paragraphs based on the mood of the music you select.
   b. Bring in old magazines or calendars. Choose a scenic picture and write a paragraph based on the mood shown in the scene. Attach the picture to the paragraph.
   c. Choose a theme—such as apathy, love, or fear. Write three distinct poems of any length that demonstrate this theme in different ways.

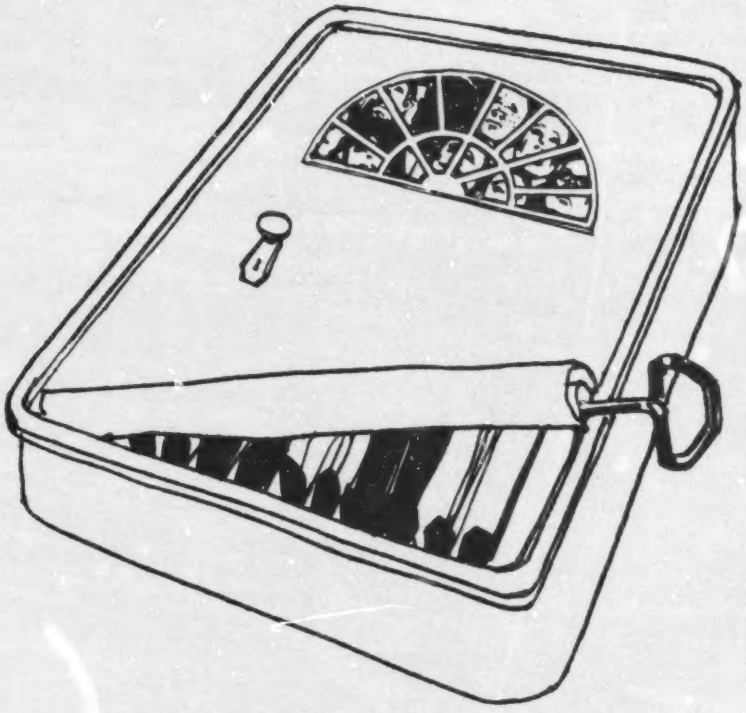
4. Stories
   a. Become familiar with a list of literary terms provided by the teacher.
   b. Write a one-page outline for a short story. Write a five- to ten-page short story based on the outline. Place the outline and the story in a folder with appropriate title and decoration.
   c. Write a one-page fable about an animal.
   d. In one to two pages, write one of your dreams as a story.
5. Serious and Comic Odds and Ends
   a. Compose a poem using form writing (concrete poetry). If you write a two-verse poem about a bell, for example, the letters and words should form a bell's shape. Show the same poem in regular verse form on the same page.
   b. For the closest holiday, create two greeting cards for two different people. Include in each a short poem you've composed and decorate the cards creatively.
   c. Make a serious or humorous birthday card with a clever lyric and picture combination. Decorate with original drawings or magazine clippings.
   d. Bring in three pieces of posterboard and construct a giant ethnic history calendar. Research important dates. Display four months on each section of posterboard.
   e. Develop the characters, illustrations, and story line for a comic book and produce a seven- to ten-page book. Title the book, decorate the cover, and color the comics.

Dorothy Williamson-Ige, Hazel Crest, Illinois

Metaphors and Similes

Some students are uncomfortable using figurative language. Here are three brief exercises, for the beginning or closing minutes of class, that can help students create metaphors and similes.

1. *Fill-in-the-blank sentences.* First read the full sentence to the class. Then read it again, stopping at the italicized portion. Students complete the sentence with a word or phrase of their own that suggests or describes the same feeling.
   a. She scowled like *thunder.*
   b. He moved down the hall like *a shadow.*
   c. Loneliness is *a dark cave.*
   d. He danced around the room like *a fractured banana.*
   e. She touched his cheek as *a rose touches the sun.*



2. *Mix-and-match columns.* Write the two lists on the chalkboard and have students write three sentences combining an object listed in column one with an item in column two.

a tire	diamonds
broken glass	doughnuts
a dog's ears	a can of sardines
a crowded hallway	wilted lettuce
a person's smile	a bicycle chain
a dandelion	a pocketful of small change
a dull knife	a table of dirty dishes
a wrinkled shirt	a bruised apple

3. *Poetry comparisons.* Have students write at least four lines describing a person they know well by comparing him or her to an object of any kind. Here's an example of a comparison written by one of my students:

At night I think
you are the moonlight
floating through my window
lifting the curtains
—Stephen Andrews

Judy Mednick, Polytechnic High School, Long Beach, California

Color Anthologies

Feeling blue? Seeing red? Turning green with envy? This activity captures the strong emotions that colors evoke or symbolize by having students write a series of poems about a particular color.

Introduce the activity by asking students for personal responses to color, which may be idiosyncratic, and general or common responses, such as yellow equals cheerfulness or blue equals sadness. Talk about the use of colors in literature (where white stands for purity or innocence; red stands for passion or anger) or in movies (*Clockwork Orange* or *Blue Lagoon*). Students may wish to research the history of color symbolism from the Middle Ages or Renaissance to the present or look for information on specific colors. Two useful class references are Cirlot's *Dictionary of Symbols* and Jung's *Man and His Symbols.*

Working individually or in small groups, students make a personal list of colors and the emotions they evoke. In a third column, students list one or more images that might represent this emotion. An example:

Green	1.	jealousy, envy	lovers, eyes, luxury car
	2.	youth, life, summer, spring	child, puppy, beginner, leaves, field, jungle, road, park

During a group discussion that follows, these lists can be written on the chalkboard or put on the bulletin board in chart form. The whole class may make a composite chart, or each individual may prefer to maintain his or her own list.

To heighten students' perception of color and emotion, play selections of different music aloud to the class and ask for responses to the "color" suggested by each piece of music. Encourage students to keep lists of the colors they "hear" and the images they "see."

Again working individually or in small groups, students choose one color and create a series of eight to ten poems or mood descriptions to reflect the chosen color through the use of strong images. Students might

use varying shades of this color, but they are not to select a second color. Poems can be in any format and can be short in length. Each should be copied on a separate piece of paper, preferably unlined, to maintain its own space and sense of identity. Encourage students to use illustrations where appropriate—either drawings or pictures from magazines. Have the students create small anthologies by grouping each set of poems in a folder with a title page and contents page. Display the color anthologies so that others might share in the emotional responses to the color spectrum.

Harriet L. King, Durham Academy, Durham, North Carolina

How to Beat Page Fright

If students freeze at the thought of filling an empty page with verse, focusing on one specific object in the classroom can help the words start flowing.

Pick an object in the room—perhaps a twisted slat in the blinds or a new pair of shoes. Have the class as a whole answer the following questions:

What is it?
Where is it?
How did it get there?
How was it put there?
Why was it put there?
What is it doing?

Record the answers on the chalkboard and encourage students to move from the general to the specific in each answer and to include as many details as possible. Once students understand how to sharpen their perception skills by concentrating on one object, I hand out the following assignment:

> Imagine yourself a photographer. Survey the classroom; then focus on one object. Frame it. Zoom in on it.
>
> Ask yourself questions about the object. List as many details as you can. Be vivid and precise.
>
> Say something remarkable. Make the ordinary extraordinary. Discover what will happen by writing it. Don't stop. Let the words flow. Once the words are down, reshape, reorder, change strong words for weak.
>
> When you're pleased with your final verse, recopy it on a new sheet of paper.

Students have used this method to produce lively, free-flowing verse. Their completed poems are read aloud to the class or posted on the bulletin board. Here is a poem prepared by one of my students:

Kim's pink comb
glimmers
against slick raven hair,
sinks slowly, then,
into the mass
of darkness.

Ellen Turlington Johnston-Hale, Gingerbread House, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Using Sticks to Create Haiku

With just a pile of sticks, you can heighten students' awareness and use of sensory detail, familiarize them with the poetry form of haiku, and teach them to compress language.

On a day that calls for us to be outside, I greet each student with a stick cut eighteen inches in length. I lead the students around the school grounds or around the block, "freezing" one person in place every so many feet. Each student holds his or her stick at any level in any direction and focuses attention within the boundaries of the radius of the circle formed by rotating the stick from tip to tip. Students concentrate on the most minute details of their realm of nature and record their impressions and their perceptions.

The following day students review their notes and put their observations into the form of haiku:

Line 1: five syllables
Line 2: seven syllables
Line 3: five syllables

The lines do not follow a rhyme or rhythm pattern. Have students try to include a reference to human nature in the last line. Here is a haiku written by one of my students:

Autumn

Spears of sunlight pierce
stained-glass crimsons of maples,
holding all in awe.

Irene Payan, Negaunee High School, Negaunee, Michigan

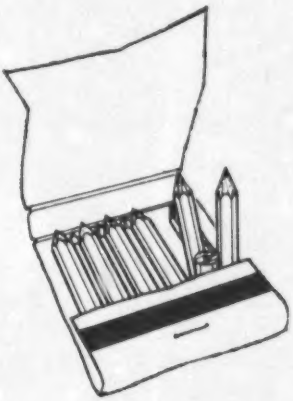
Candle Power

A darkened classroom illuminated by candles can encourage poetry writing. Pick a gray day for this activity so that drawing the blinds will darken the room a bit. Bring in candles of various sizes, shapes, and colors. (Be sure to find out in advance whether there are restrictions on the use of candles in the classroom.) Select several recordings to help set the mood—perhaps music representing darkness or a storm.

Start by reviewing some of the concepts and terms of poetry: symbolism, imagery, metaphor and simile, and connotation and denotation. Light the candles, turn on the mood music, and have students put their senses of perception to work. Have students discuss their reactions to and perceptions of the candles and list these responses and feelings on the chalkboard, with students suggesting whether each statement should be classified as *literal function, imagery or mental picture,* or *symbolism.* Encourage widely different perceptions of the candles: "The candles glimmer and shimmer like a bundle of stars." "A candle could stand for goodness in the world, and darkness could be evil." "The candle melts so slowly that there is just a small trickle of liquid wax making its way down the candle." Discuss the significance of the comments in each category.

Then turn down the lights and turn up the music. Have students make their own list of words associated with what they are seeing, smelling, feeling, and hearing. Students use these vocabulary lists to write a poem about the candles or about any topic brought to mind by the candles. Have students read their poem aloud as the mood music continues to play.

Sharon Summers, Arapahoe High School, Littleton, Colorado



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